(1801)

December 5, 1978
OF STATE A/CDC/MR
DATE 2/27/81
FOI EXEMPTIONS

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Files

FROM: ARA/CAR - Richard A. McCoy

SUBJECT: Contacts and Conversations with Mrs. Debra Blakey (May 12, 13, and 16-18)

At approximately 10:30 AM on Friday morning May 12, Mrs. Blakey came to the Consulate and asked to see me. She was very nervous and appeared to be under some emotional strain. When I escorted her from the waiting room into my office, she asked if she could speak to me in confidence. She said that she wanted to be certain that what she said to me could not possibly leave the room and that no one else be made aware of it. I promised her that anything she said would be held in confidence. Mrs. Blakey then said she needed Consular assistance in departing Guyana but was afraid that if the Peoples Temple learned of her plans they would prevent her from leaving. She said that she had a ticket that was sent to her by her sister through a ruse but that she did not have a passport since her passport was at the Agricultural Community in Jonestown. I asked

Mrs. Blakey whether she would agree to have the remainder of the conversation heard by Vice Consul Daniel Weber since he would need to help with some of the arrangements concerning her departure. I pointed out to her that Weber as far as I knew was unknown to the Temple. Mrs. Blakey mentioned that the Temple had put out the word that they had a member of the Embassy under their control and it was that reason that she was apprehensive about talking to anyone although she decided to come to me, because of the friendly sympathetic attitude I appeared to have towards everyone (SIC). I assured her that I found it difficult to believe that the Temple had been able to suborn any member of the Embassy staff and if it was true they certainly had not suborned me so she should not worry. However, because she was very nervous I immediately shut my door and informed my secretary that I would not be receiving any visitors and that she was not repeat not to inform anyone that Mrs. Blakey was here or had been here. Through the assistance of the political section I arranged to have pictures taken of Mrs. Blakey and had her complete a passport application and execute a sworn statement to justify

issuing her an emergency passport. After Vice Consul Weber entered the office we then discussed the arrangements for her departure. It was agreed that Mr. Weber would meet Mrs. Blakey at the Pagusus hotel at approximately 9:30 PM that night. That evening Mr. Weber would drive her to the airport and assist her through the immigration and customs formalities. Mrs. Blakey before leaving warned me that at a scheduled appointment I had that afternoon with the Peoples Temple they would be taping the conversation and would attempt to get me to state "if mersenaries hired planes to fly over Jonestown the Peoples Temple should shoot them down". This statement had been made by me in jest at a previous meeting at the Peoples Temple. The Temple had been insistent that the Embassy arrange protection for the community against a possible attack by armed mercenaries hired by the Concerned Relatives organization. My response had always been that this was a matter they should take up with the Guyanese authorities since they are responsible for protection of individuals located on their soil and as such are equally responsible for defending Jonestown. I thanked Mrs. Blakey for her warning and promised that I would not inadvertantly indicate that I had been warned.

As expected at the 2:30 meeting that was attended by Mrs. Blakey, Terry Jones, and another individual (NFI) the conversation came around to this threat on Jonestown. I did not repeat my earlier remarks but simply reiterated that protection of Jonestown was the responsibility of the Government of Guyana (GOG). Later at approximately 10:00 PM that evening Mrs. Blakey called me at my home to report that she had been delayed but would still try to meet Mr. Weber at the agreed location. Contact was made with Vice Consul Weber who drove Mrs. Blakey to the airport. At 11:30 PM Vice Consul Weber telephoned me from the airport to inform me that a problem had developed. The immigration officer would not clear Mrs. Blakey for departure because she did not have a tax clearance. This is required of all visitors to Guyana who resided in the country for more than three months. After much pleading and some attempted arm twisting which came to no avail, the plane departed without Mrs. Blakey. Vice Consul Weber accompanied Mrs. Blakey back to the city where he arranged a hotel room for her at the Tower hotel which is located diagonally across the

street from the Embassy. Mrs. Blakey was given the Embassy and Weber's home telephone number and the Marine Security Guard at the Embassy was instructed to admit her to the Embassy building if she so requested. Vice Consul Weber told her to call him immediately if she felt she was in any danger.

The next morning I met Mrs. Blakey at the Embassy around 9:00 AM. She seemed subdued but otherwise alright. I arranged for her to call her sister in California and also made another reservation on the plane departing at 1:00 PM that afternoon. Mr. Weber accompanied her to the appropriate tax office and assisted her in getting her tax clearance. At this point the Embassy began receiving telephone calls from the Peoples Temple inquiring of Mrs. Blakey's whereabouts. In all cases we responded that she was not there. Finally Ms. Karen Layton asked if I saw her to pass a message to have her call their Georgetown office. I replied that I had not seen her but if I saw her I would pass the message on.

NOTE: Mrs. Blakey was sitting next to me when this phone call came in.

Mrs. Blakey began talking to me about the Temple stating that she just wanted to get away from them. She said she harbored no ill will toward them, but that a number of bizarre and frightening developments were starting to take place in Jonestown. She confided to me that all the Consular visits had been stage managed and tnat the sect had been practicing mass suicide. I asked her whether these mass suicide rehearsals were just another form of Jones' psychological control. She responded she wasn't sure but that she just had to get out. At this point the telephone rang and it was again the Peoples Temple calling. This time she agreed to accept the call and spoke with members of the Temple and Jones himself through a telephone patch. Apparently, they were trying to convince her not to return to the U.S., but to go to another foreign country. I later informed the Ambassador of the conversation I had with Mrs. Blakey pertaining to the mass suicide plan. He suggested that either I or Vice Consul Weber have Mrs. Blakey complete a sworn statement about such plans. (Weber took a statement from Mrs. Blakey concerning this mass suicide plan). As I was also leaving for the United States on this day, I

returned home and Vice Consul Weber later escorted Mrs. Blakey to the airport where she passed through airport controls without any delay. There was a tearful departure scene played out by Terry Jones, Karen Layton, and several other Temple members.

During our flight to New York Mrs. Blakey and I had a long discussion about the Peoples Temple and its activities in Guyana. She explained how firearms were smuggled into the country in the false bottoms of suitcases of members and in shipments of household effects. She mentioned how she as a treasurer helped to divert funds to foreign bank accounts and said that Peoples Temple assets were in the millions. She explained the total control that Jones seemed to exert over all his followers. When I questioned her on that concerning some of the bright people I had met in the organization I found this hard to believe that people would allow themselves to be so controlled. Mrs. Blakey agreed that there were very many wonderful people who are members of the organization who had fallen into a trap of trusting Jones and who now even had they wanted to get out couldn't get out. I asked her about

some of the people whom she thought would be most likely to defect or who she thought wanted to get out so that on my next visit I could target these people and possibly convince them to leave with me. She mentioned Mike Prokes, Joyce Parks, and possibly Harriet Tropp. She also said that Laura Johnston had been severely beaten on several occasions for lack of sufficient revolutionary fervor. I asked her why with the terrain and dense jungle in the area I could not understand why people couldn't simply slip out through the jungle and go to Matthews Ridge to request assistance. She said two reasons, one because of the armed guards that ringed Jonestown that would prevent people from leaving, and two the fact that Jones had convinced the people that the Guyanese would return any Jonestown defectors back to the commune. Therefore, because of the isolation of the camp, people simply felt they had no choice. I said what about when a Consular Officer visited Jonestown, they had an opportunity then. She agreed but said they were just to afraid to do so, because they were afraid that if they committed themselves and the Consular Officer was unable to get them out

of the camp they would suffer. I said I know, but I told them I would take them out. She just shrugged and said they just didn't have that much confidence in one individual. She had schemed to be transferred to the Georgetown office so that she would have an opportunity to get away from the group. I said what I could not understand is how all these people could allow themselves to be brought to Guyana. She said there were a few that were drugged throughout the trip, others came because of peer pressure but most came willingly. Mrs. Blakey then asked me what should she do; should she go to the press with this information? I replied that I couldn't see why she would go to the press because there had already been reports in the press that had not accomplished anything; but what was needed was some official corroboration of the criminal allegations of what was occurring in the United States that would give cause for the State Department to request the Government of Guyana through the Embassy to conduct an official investigation into the conditions at Jonestown. I suggested U.S. Customs Service and the Alcohol, Fire Arms, and Tobacco investigative service of the Department of Treasury as the likely organization that could

hopefully come up with some information on this. I said that our biggest problem in this regard is confirming the statements such as she had made. This is very difficult to do because of the restrictions on how much an Embassy can investigate its own citizens.

Our conversation ended upon arriving in New York. I assisted Mrs. Blakey in arranging hotel accommodations at JFK airport after she had called her sister and determined her onward flight arrangements for California. We then said goodbye and I left for my hotel near Laguardia airport.

Sometime between May 16 and May 18 Mrs. Blakey telephoned me from California. I was in the Department at a conference and spoke with her from a telephone in the office of the Guyana Desk Officer. The Desk Officer was there and heard my side of the conversation. Mrs. Blakey began the conversation by thanking me for the assistance that had been given to her to depart Guyana. She then said that she simply could not keep quiet about what she knew and again asked should she go to the press, or what should she do? I answered that she had to do what she thought was best and reiterated that going to the press would not accomplish anything since press reports alone

would not enable us to solve the matter. I again strongly recommended that she contact those law enforcement agencies I had suggested to her previously since the only way we were ever going to crack this situation was for me to be able to show the Guyanese authorities an official report of investigation that would indicate the allegations of criminal activities were more than simply those made by members who could be identified as malcontents or former disgrunttled members of the Peoples Temple. Debbie said she was worried about her mother Mrs. Lisa Layton and her brother Larry. I promised that I would inquire about them and see what I could do about getting them to leave on my next visit to Jonestown, which I thought would be sometime in July or August, depending upon when I would be leaving Guyana to return to the U.S. She said that she would return the articles of clothing that my wife and I had loaned to her. I told her it was not necessary, but was glad she found them useful to offset the chill of New York. I asked her what her plans were, and she responded that she was either planning to, or would begin working soon as a secretary for a pharmaceutical

Company. She remarked that she was relieved to be away from the organization, especially, now since she could see just how warped Jones' had become and how this had affected the entire community. I wished her well and told her if she ever needed any assistance to please let me know. I talked briefly, I believe, with her brother-in-law and sister who also thanked me for helping Mrs. Blakey return.

Drafted: ARA/CAR:R McCoy:kc
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